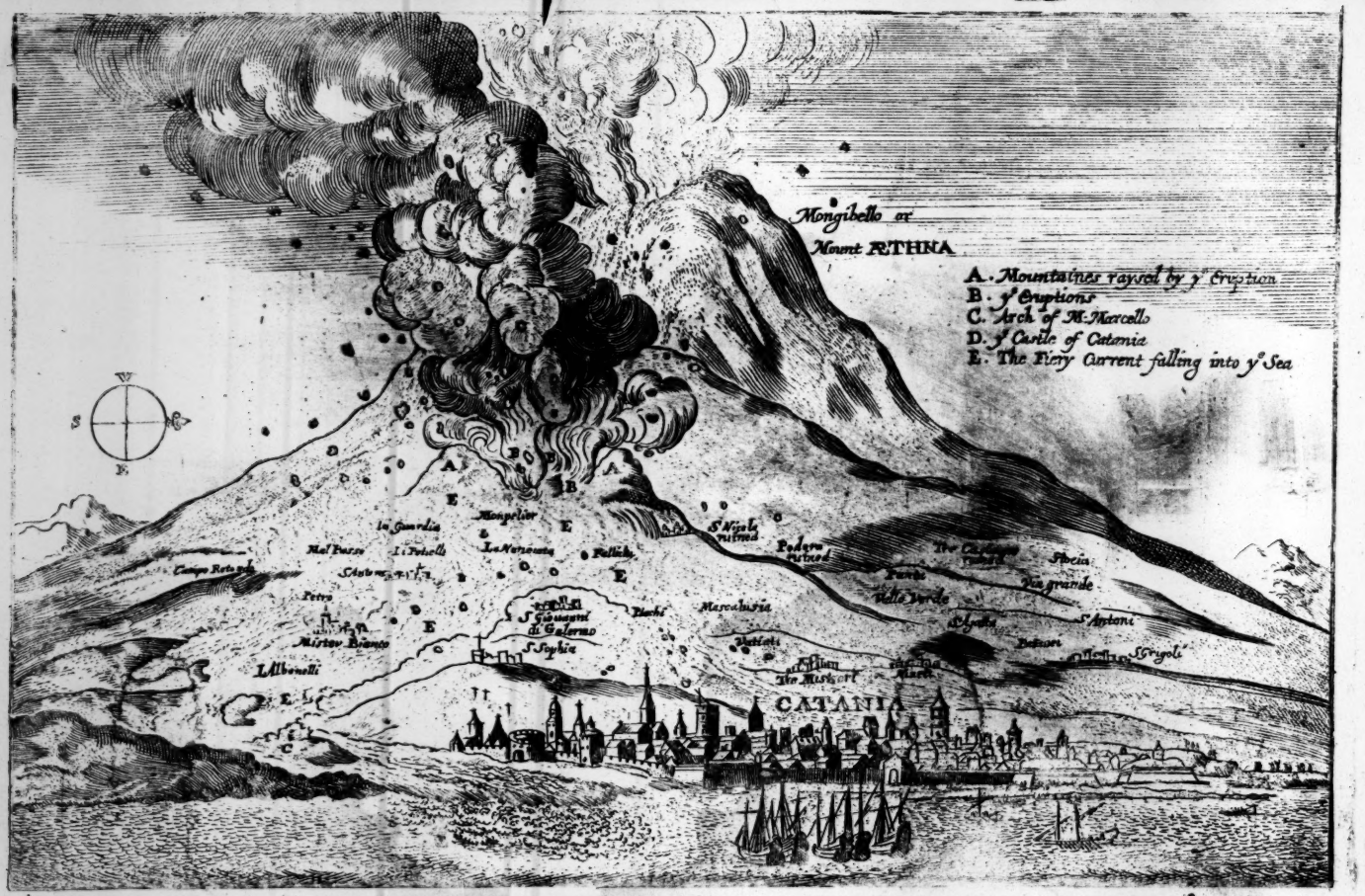
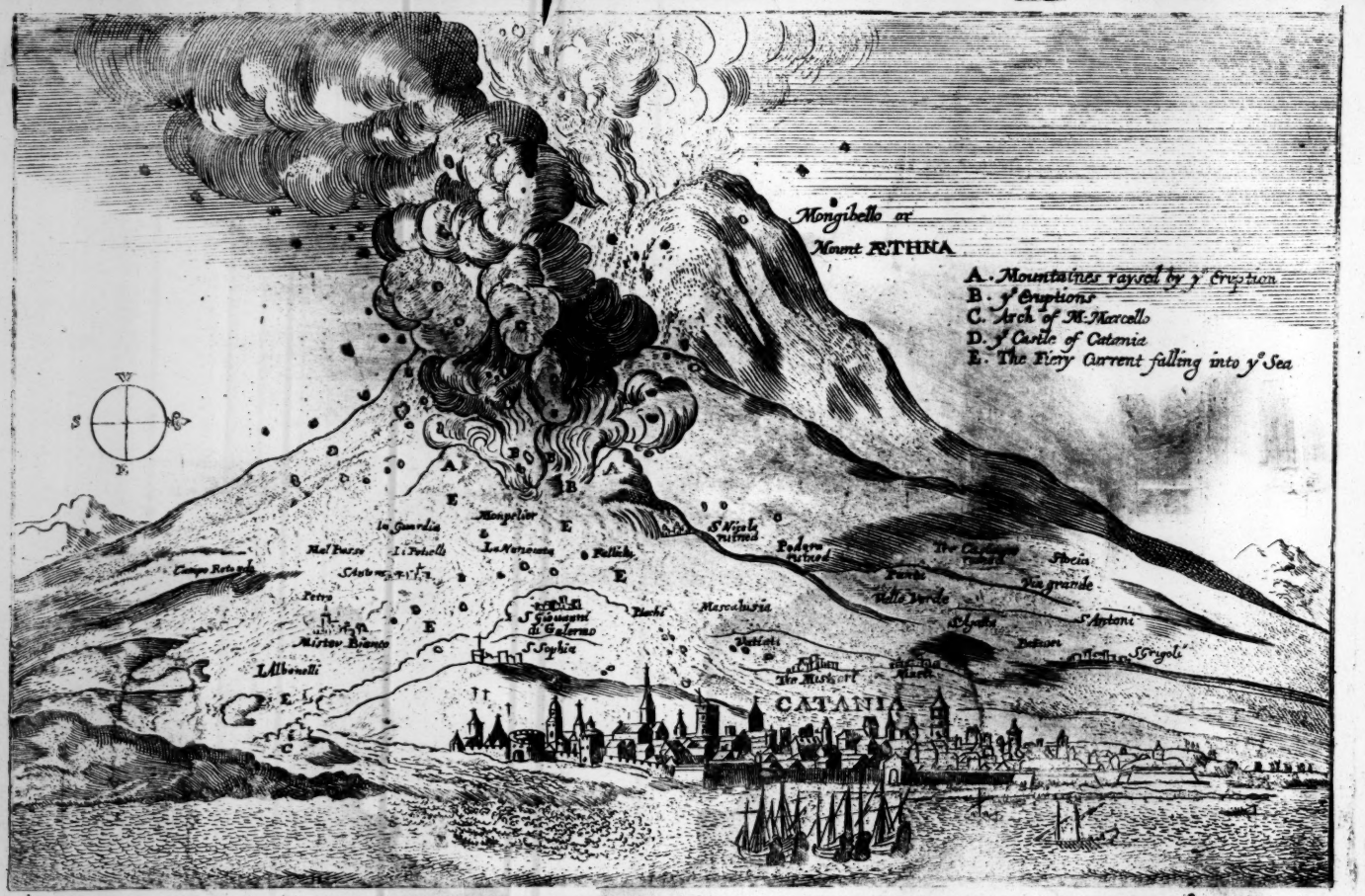



A TRUE DESIGNE OF THE LATE ERUPTION OF MOVNT ÆTNA IN SICILY Ao 1669.




A TRUE DESIGNE OF THE LATE ERUPTION OF MOVNT ÆTNA IN SICILY Ao 1669.

A True and Exact

# RELATION

Of the Late

*Prodigious Earthquake & Eruption*

OF

# Mount Ætna,

Or, *MONTE-GIBELLO*;

As it came in a LETTER

Written to His Majesty from *Naples*

By the Right Honorable

*The Earle of* Winchilsea,

His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his Return from thence, Visiting *Catania* in the Island of *Sicily*, was an Ey-witness of *That Dreadfull Spectacle.*

Together with a more particular *Narrative* of the same, as it is Collected out of severall Relations sent from *CATANIA.*

**Published by Authority.**

Printed by *T. Newcomb* in the *Savoy*, 1669.

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# A true and exact Relation of the late prodigious Earthquake and Eruption of the Mount *Ætna*, or *Monte-Gibello*, as it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from *Naples*, by the Right Honourable the Earl of *Winchilsea*, His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his return from thence, visited *Catania*, an eye witness of that dreadful spectacle.

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May it please your MAJESTY,

IN my Voyage from Malta to this place, wherein I have used all the diligence the season hath given me leave, I touched at the City of Catania in Sicily, and was there most kindly Invited by the Bishop to lodge

*in his Palace, which I accepted, that so I might be the better able to inform Your Majesty of that extraordinary Fire, which comes from Mount* Gibel *15 miles distant from that City; which for its horridness in the aspect, for the vast quantity thereof, (for it is 15 miles in length, and 7 in breadth) for its monstrous devastation, and quick progress, may be termed an Inundation of Fire, a Floud of Fire, Cinders and burning Stones, burning with that Rage as to advance into the Sea 600 yards, and that to a mile in breadth, which I saw; and that which did augment my admiration was, to see in the Sea this matter like ragged rocks, burning in four fathom water, two fathom higher then the Sea it self, some parts liquid and moving, and throwing off, not without great violence, the stones about it, which like a crust of a vast bigness, and red hot, fell*



into

into the Sea every moment, in ſome place or other, cauſing a great and horrible noiſe, ſmoak and hiſsing in the Sea; and thus more and more coming after it, making a firm foundation in the Sea it ſelf. I ſtayed there from nine a Clock on Saturday morning, to ſeven next morning, and this Mountain of Fire and Stones, with Cinders, had advanced into the Sea 20 yards at leaſt, in ſeveral places; in the middle of this Fire, which burn'd in the Sea, it hath formed a paſſage like to a River, with its Banks on each ſide very ſteep and craggy, and in this Channel moves the greateſt quantity of this Fire, which is the moſt liquid, with Stones of the ſame compoſition, and Cinders all red hot, ſwimming upon the fire of a great magnitude; from this River of Fire doth proceed under the great Maſſe of the Stones which are generally three fathom high all

over

*over the Country, where it burns and in other places much more, there are ſecret Conduits or Rivulets of this liquid matter, which Communicates Fire and heat into all parts more or leſs, and melts the Stones and Cinders by fits in thoſe places where it toucheth them, over and over again; where it meets with Rocks or Houſes of the ſame matter (as many are) they melt and go away with the Fire; where they find other compoſitions they turn them to lime or aſhes, (as I am informed.) The compoſition of this Fire, Stones and Cinders, are Sulphur, Nitre, Quick-ſilver, Sal-Armoniac, Lead, Iron, Braſs, and all other Mettals. It moves not regularly, nor conſtantly down hill; in ſome places it hath made the Valleys Hills, and the Hills that are not high are now Valleys. When it was night I went upon two Towers in divers places, and could*

could plainly ſee at 10 miles diſtance, as we judged, the Fire to begin to run from the Mountain in a direct line, the flame to aſcend as high and as big as one of the higheſt and greateſt Steeples in Your Majeſties Kingdoms, and to throw up great Stones into the Air; I could diſcern the River of Fire to deſcend the Mountain of a terrible fiery or red colour, and ſtones of a paler Red, to ſwim thereon, and to be, ſome as big as an ordinary Table. We could ſee this fire to move in ſeveral other places, and all the Country covered with Fire, aſcending with great Flames, in many places, ſmoaking like to a violent furnace of Iron melted, making a noiſe with the great pieces that fell, eſpecially thoſe which fell into the Sea. A Cavalier of Malta, who lives there, and attended me, told me, that the River was as liquid where it iſſues out of the Mountain, as

water,

water, and came out like a Torrent with great violence, and is five or six fathom deep, and as broad, and that no stones do sink therein. I assure Your Majesty, no Pen can express how terrible it is, nor can all the Art and Industry of the world quench, or divert that which is burning in the Country. In 40 dayes time it hath destroyed the habitations of 27 thousand persons, made two Hills of one, 1000 paces high, a piece, and one is four miles in compass, as Your Majesty will see by the draught that I take the boldness to send herewith; it was the best I could get, but hath nothing of the Progress into the Sea; the confusion was so great in the City, which is almost surrounded with Mountains of Fire, that I could not get any to draw one, but I have taken care to have one sent after me for Your Majesty. Of 20000 persons which inhabited Catania,

nia, 3000 *did only remain; all their Goods are carried away, the Cannons of Brass are removed out of the Castle, some great Bells taken down, the City-Gates Walled up next the Fire, and preparation made all to abandon the City.*

*That Night which I lay there, it Rained Ashes all over the City, and Ten Miles at Sea it troubled my Eyes. This* Fire *in its Progress met with a* Lake *of four Miles in compass, and it was not only satisfied to fill it up, though it was four fathom deep, but hath made of it a* Mountain.

*I send also to Your* Sacred Majesty *a* Relation *in Print which the* Bishop *gave me, wherein the Beginning is Related, and several Curious Passages. I most humbly beseech Your Pardon for the hindring* Your Majesty *so long from Your better Employments: And I beseech You,*

*Great Sir, ever to believe I Love and Reverence Your Person above All Expression: for, I am*

*Naples the* 27 *of* April
7 *of* May.
1669.

Your Majesties

*Most Obedient, Most Humble, and Most Faithful*

Subject *and* Servant

*Winchilsea.*

A Particular

# NARRATIVE

Of the late Dreadful

# Earthquake

AND

# ERUPTION

As it is Collected out of ſeveral Relations from

## *CATANIA.*

*Mount Ætna*, or *Monte Gibello*, a Mountain ſo Renowned throughout the World for its height and greatneſs, but much more for thoſe Prodigious Flames, Smoak, and Aſhes which it hath caſt out from the top of it, whilſt the other parts are continually (even in the midſt of Summer) cover'd with Snow, has been for many Ages obſerv'd once, or ſometimes oftner, in the ſpace

of about fifteen years, to throw up more than ordinary Flames, with much Smoak and Stones, and great quantities of Aſhes; which (though terrible to the neighbouring Towns and Villages) was yet wont, in little time, to abate of its fury, and prove but ſeldom more injurious to the Countrey near it. than by communicating largely its aſhes, which though for the preſent it did ſomewhat incommode them, they had afterwards a conſiderable Compenſation in the product of their Lands, which by this means were render'd more fruitful.

But on Friday the 11th of *March* 1669, the Sun was obſerved before its ſetting to appear of a pale and dead colour, which (being contrary to what it ever before appear'd to us) ſtruck no ſmall terror into the Inhabitants, all Objects appearing alſo of the ſame colour, with a paleneſs received from that of the Sun. The ſame night happened in this City as well as the whole Countrey hereabouts, a terrible and unuſual Earthquake, whoſe ſtrong and unequal motions, joyned with horrible Roarings from *Monte-Gibello* exceedingly frighted the Inhabitants, but was ſo extraordinarily violent in the Countrey adjacent, that the People were forced

forced to abandon their houſes and to fly into the Fields to avoid the danger threatned them from the falling of their houſes. The Village of *Nicoloſi* was of all others the moſt dreadfully handled by this furious Earthquake, the houſes and other buildings being ſhaken all in pieces, and buried in their own Ruines; the poor People (who had preſerved their lives by a timely flight, with ſuch little of their Goods as their haſty fears would permit them to carry out with them) continued a night or two in the fields, beholding with grief and aſtoniſhment the ruine of their habitations: but obſerving that by theſe violent concuſſions, the Earth began to open in ſeveral places, and to threaten them with inevitable ruine, they fled, though with much trouble and amazement to this City. Theſe ſhakings of the Earth being ſo frequent and violent, that the People went reeling and ſtaggering, with much difficulty ſupporting one onother from falling, in ſo much as what with their want of ſleep, the pains they were forced to take in travelling, and the great terrors imprinted on them by what they had ſeen and ſuffered, they appeared at their arrival in this City as ſo many diſtracted People, wholly inſenſible of what they did. This

This dreadful convulſion of the Earth was immediately followed on Monday *March* 11. about 10 at night by three terrible Eruptions, much about the ſame time, and at little diſtance one from the other.

Theſe ſaid Eruptions were obſerved to be on the ſide of *Monte Gibello*, about 2 miles beyond the Mountain, called *Montpileri*, from whence with a terrible noiſe it threw up its flames with much fury and violence about a hundred yards in height, its noiſe not roaring only inwards from the Belly of the Mountain as before, but violently cracking like peals of Ordnance or Thunder, from the ſide of it throwing out vaſt ſtones, ſome of them of 300 pound weight, which being (as it were) ſhot through the Air, fell ſeveral miles diſtant from the place, whilſt the whole Air was filled with Smoak, burning Cinders, and Aſhes, which fell like a fiery Rain upon the Countrey.

In the mean time iſſued from the ſide of this Prodigious Mountain a vaſt Torrent of Melted and burning Matter, which, like an Inundation drowned, as in a Flood of Fire, the Countrey on this ſide of it.

This Burning River ran down upon the Mountain

Mountain *Montpileri*, which, oppoſing its direct courſe, it divided it ſelf into two ſtreams, which encompaſſed the ſaid Mountain; one of them taking its way by *La Gnardia*, the *Convent* of *St. Anne*, and *Malpaſſo*, the other by the Towns of *Montpileri* and *Falicchi*; which in few hours were wholly deſtroyed and loſt, not ſo much as any ſign of them remaining, with ſeveral leſſer Villages and Farms, and with them the famous *Image* of the bleſſed Lady of the *Annunciata*; which, though highly reverenced throughout the whole *Iſland*, eſteemed the Wonder of *Sicily* and the whole World, and to which the people with much Devotion reſorted in Pilgrimage from the remoteſt parts, was alſo ſwallowed up and conſumed by this dreadful Torrent.

This fiery and burning Deluge immediately ſpread it ſelf to above ſix miles in breadth, ſeeming to be ſomewhat of the colour of melted and burning Glaſs; but, as it cools, becomes hard and Rocky, and every where in its paſſage leaves Hills and Pyramids of that Matter behind it.

At the ſame time *Monte Gibello* from its top raged with dreadful Flames, which with its noiſe

and

and concuſſions of the Earth ſtill continuing, added not a little to the Terror of the People, who ran with Cries and Lamentations about the City and Countrey, expecting nothing but to be ſwallowed up or conſumed by Fire, having no other apprehenſions but of Death, and a general Conflagration.

The two Torrents of Fire forward, deſtroying all things in their way, and by Wedneſday, *March* 13th, had on the Weſt-ſide branched it ſelf into ſeveral ſtreams, and overran *Campo Rotundo*, *St. Pietro*, and *Moſtorbianco*, with *La Potielli*, and *St. Antonino*; and on the *Eaſt-part* ruin'd the lower part of *Maſcalicia*, and *Le Placchi*, taking its way towards this City.

On *Thurſday* the 14th, the Wind came *Eaſtwards* an which day fell abundance of Rain, which abated not the progreſs of the Fire; which on the *Eaſt-ſide* had from *Maſcalucia* made its way to *St. Giovanni di Galermo*, the lower part whereof it deſtroy'd; and paſſing on, ſeem'd to threaten this City on one ſide, as did that on the *Weſt-ſide* the other.

As the Fire approached, the Religious every where appeared with much Devotion, carrying

in

in Procession their Reliques, especially those of *St. Agatha*, the famous Martyr of *Catania*, in which they reposed no small confidence, followed by great multitudes of People, some of them mortifying themselves with Whips and other signes of Pennance, with great complaints and cries, expressing their dreadful expectation of the events of those Prodigious Fiery Inundations.

Whilst the People were thus busied in their Devotions, and astonisht by their Fears, News was brought to the Magistrates of the City, that a considerable number of Thieves and Robbers had taken the opportunity of this general Distraction, to make a Prey of the already distressed People, and that they had murdered several of them for their Goods; and that it was to be fear'd that the City of *Catania* it self might run some danger from the great numbers of them which were about the Countrey, and from thence took their opportunities to get into the Town. Whereupon, consultation being had for the prevention of farther mischief from them, the Commander of the Castle was Ordered with a considerable number of Horse, and a party of *Spaniards*, to secure the Countrey,

and City againſt theſe Robbers; who immediately ſent out ſeveral parties with his Provoſt Marſhal, with Orders to ſeize on all ſuſpected perſons, and ſuch as were not able to give a good account of themſelves: and, for ſuch as were taken in the Fact robbing, to Execute them by Martial Law, without any farther Tryal; and accordingly cauſed three pair of Gallows to be ſet up for their ſpeedy Execution; one before the Gate *Di Aci*, a ſecond in the *Market place*, and a third before the Gate *Della Decima*, ſetting ſtrong Guards upon the Gates of the City, and cauſing all ſuſpected Houſes to be ſearched, an Account to be given in of all Lodgers and ſuch perſons to be ſecured, as could any ways fall under a ſuſpition.

The poor People out of the Countrey being by this Prodigious calamity ſtript out of all their Eſtates, and reduced to great extremity, fled moſt of them for refuge and relief to this City, with great Lamentations moving the Charity of the Magiſtrates, who were readily inclined to give them the beſt aſſiſtance they were able; and the Citizens moved by their Complaints and Sufferings, freely open'd their

Doors

Doors, filling their Houſes with as many of thoſe diſtreſſed People, as they could poſſibly receive; the Biſhop, and all perſons of Quality and Eſtate contributing largely for their ſupport, till better Order could be taken for the diſpoſing of them.

The City of *Meſſina* alſo, and ſeveral other Cities (informed of this extraordinary Calamity) ſent hither large ſupplies of Proviſions, offering their beſt aſſiſtance to this place, in caſe of extremity.

All the Elements at this time ſeemed to make War upon us, and to conſpire together for the puniſhment of the Inhabitants: the Air was continually darkened with Clouds and Smoke, agitated by great and violent Winds, and oftentimes ſhowred down great Rains, inſomuch as the Sun from the beginning of theſe Eruptions, very ſeldom appeared to us, and when it did, (with extraordinary paleneſs,) for a little time only, and (as it were, abhorring ſo dreadful a Spectacle) ſoon hid its face again under a thick Cloud.

The Sea ran much higher than it was wont to do, and by its extraordinary Roaring, and in ſome places overflowing its Banks, added

not a little to our Conſternation. The Land every where infeſted with Thieves, in ſo much that till by the extraordinary care taken by the Magiſtrates and Officers, ſevere execution was don upon ſuch as were apprehended in the Fact, no Perſon was able to ſtir abroad without danger of his life; whilſt the Fire, by this prodigious overflowing of the Mountain, threatened to take poſſeſſion of all.

On Friday the 15th the ſtream of fiery Matter which deſtroyed the lower part of *St. Giovanni di Galermo*, divided it ſelf into two parts, one of its branches taking its way toward *Moſterbianco*, the other threatening the City of *Catania*, but this laſt was obſerved to move with more ſlowneſs than before, having in 24 hours time ſcarcely gained 20 paces.

On the 18th being Monday, the Torrents being ſtill ſeen to draw nearer and nearer to this City, the Senate with Monſegnior *Cambuchi*, the Biſhop of this place, followed by all the Clergy Secular and Regular, and an infinite number of People, went in a ſolemn Proceſſion out of this City to *Monte de St. Sofia*, carrying out with greateſt Devotion their choiceſt

choiceſt Relicks, and upon an Altar erected in view of the Mountain, expoſed them, where they Celebrated Maſs, and uſed the Exorciſmes accuſtomed upon ſuch extraordinary occaſions, all which time the Mountain ceaſed not as before with exceſſive roaring to throw up its ſmoak and flames with extraordinary violence, and abundance of great ſtones, which were carried through the Air, ſome of them falling within their view, though at ten miles diſtance from the Eruption; the Aſhes which proceeded from thence were ſcattered in great abundance, as well on this City as on the Countrey adjacent, every where in the Fields with Cinders, and the heat of the ſaid Aſhes deſtroying the Graſs, which obliged the People to drive away their Cattle to a farther diſtance, which would otherwiſe have periſhed for want of food.

Theſe ſtreams of ruine daily crept nearer and nearer to this City, but by uneven and irregular motions, according as it was more or leſs ſupplyd from its fountain; but on Wedneſday the 20th, we perceived that that branch of it which ſeemed moſt to threaten this City from *St. Giovanni di Galermo* was wholly extinguiſht, and the other

ther which bent its courſe towards *Moſter-bianco* ran but ſlowly and gave us ſome hopes that its fury was alſo near ſpent, but the other Torent which had before overflown *Moſterbianco*, continued its motion with as much violence as ever, being in breadth above a Muſquet ſhot over; but in probability could not eaſily overflow to the Weſtwards which was defended by its Rocky ſcituation; another branch which ran by *Santo Pietro* was obſerved to be much larger then the reſt, and its ſtream more quick and active, but meeting with ſome oppoſition in its way, it made ſome ſtop, onely ſending out a Rivolet toward the Eaſtwards about three or four yords wide, of its moſt ſubtle and active matter, which directed its courſe towards a ſmall Village about a furlong diſtant from its main ſtream; another Branch threatened *Campo Rotundo*, but bent its courſe Weſtwards towards the Farme of *Valcorrente*, where its Fiery body was ſcattered into ſeveral deep and Rocky places, without any conſiderable damage.

About this time we had hopes that the violence of this eruption had been over, the Mountain not throwing out its Flames with that

that violence as before, and its noiſe and roaring in a great meaſure ceaſed.

Thoſe who at neareſt diſtance took a view of the Mountain, informed, that the top of it was fallen in, and the Mountain ſuppoſed to want near a mile of its former height; that the largeſt of the Mouths from whence theſe Fiery ſtreams were vented, was about halfe a mile in compaſs, but the view of this dreadful inundation carried ſo much terror in it as they were not able to expreſs; from all theſe Mouths were vomited Rivers of a thick and fiery ſubſtance of ſtone and Metals melted, whoſe depth was various according to the ſeveral places it filled in its paſſage, in ſome places 4, in others 8, 12 or 15 yards and upwards; its breadth in ſome places 6 miles, in others much more; its Flame like that of Brimſtone, and its motion like that of Quickſilver; advancing ordinarily very ſlowly, unleſs where it was provoked by the addition of a freſh Torrent, or ſome conſiderable deſcent. Whereſoever it paſſed, it left large heaps of its congealed matter, with which it covered and burnt the Earth, melting the walls of Caſtles and Houſes, throwing down and conſuming all

before

before it, nothing being yet found able to resist its force, nor any thing able to quench its burning, Water being observed rather to add to its fury; whereſoever it has passed, it has left its dreadful marks behind it, levelling some hills and raising others, so much changing the scituation, that not the least trace of any place or Town remains, nothing being to be seen but confused heaps of ragged Stone, which yielding a noisome fume, strikes terror and astonishment into all that behold it.

On Friday the 22, the Mountain again roared with much loudness, and threw up from its Mouth a vast quantity of Matter, which formed two large Hills higher and larger then that of *Montpileri*, with a large bank of the same matter to the Eastwards, sending down a violent stream of its liquid Matter towards *Malpasso*, much enlarging the former Current, and passing thence to *Campo Rotundo* and *Santo Pietro*, compleated the Ruines of those Towns, driving furiously towards *Mosser-bianco*; the other stream by *Santo Giovanni di Galerno* being wholly diverted and extinguisht.

From this time till the 25th, the Mountain continued silent, but then it burst out again with

with more force than ever before, its noiſe much louder, like peals of Ordnance, and ſo foreible and laſting, as for 24 hours it cauſed a ſhaking and trembling in our Buildings, the Air ſo filled with ſmoak and Aſhes, as darkened the face of the *Sky*.

The Birds and Fowl about this time, either through want of Food, or illneſs of Air, which was corrupted with the noiſome ſmells ariſing from theſe Burnings, were obſerved to lie dead in all places.

On the 28th, the Grand Current was advanced near the City as far as the old *Capucins*, which ſtruck ſo great a Terror into the People, that moſt of them left the City, only ſome Officers remaining with ſuch perſons as were under their Command, who have ſecured and ſent away the *Magazine* and all the Artillery from the Caſtle.

*A Later* Relation *from* Catania, *bearing Date the 27th of* April, *gives us this farther Account:* viz.

THe Dreadful Inundation from *Monte Gibello* having deſtroyed many *Caſtles* and *Towns*, with an infinite loſs, and utter ruine to the Inhabitants, arrived lately with a renewed Force at *Moſtor-bianco*, which it has wholly ruin'd, from thence paſſing on to *Albanelli*, in four Dayes ſpace deſtroyed all the Gardens and Vineyards, with 63 Thouſand Vines.

On *Wedneſday*, *April* 16. With an Impetuous Fiery Torrent it came towards *Sardanello*, where all the remainder of the Inhabitants of this City were Spectators of it, which reſembled

a

a River of melted and burning Braſs, about ten Ells wide, running with ſwiftneſs to the Arch of *Marcus Marcellus*, a Famous Piece of Antiquity, and paſſing under it, ruin'd about 6 Ells of it, which was the breadth of the Current in that place: from thence it ran to *Madonna di Monſerrato*, which it wholly deſtroyed: then falling down to *Madonna delle Gratie*, it entred in at one Gate, and paſſed through another, without any conſiderable hurt, and running through the Gate *Della Decima*, filled all the Plaine *Di Schiara Viva*, where it was above ſix Ells deep. Then taking its way towards the Bulwark, on the Sea-ſide, under the Caſtle of this City, it ran by, two Ells deep into the Sea; in which, (to the great wonder of all that ſaw it) it has made its Progreſs a mile in length, and as much in breadth, and is drawing towards the Gate of the Channel, which gives us great Apprehenſions, leaſt it may that way Invade the City it ſelf: Nor is there leſs Danger on the ſide *Del Tindaro*, where there runs a great Torrent of the ſame Active matter, which drawes near, and ſeemes to threaten

the Walls, and is in that place about a mile in breadth, having over-flowed and deſtroyed all the Gardens, from the Gate *Della Decima*, as farr as *Madonna delli Amellati.*

# *A* LIST *of the moſt conſiderable* Towns *and* Places *Ruin'd and deſtroyed by the Dreadful* Earthquake *and* Eruptions.

THe Town of *Nicoloſi* wholly Ruin'd by the *Earthquake*.

The Towns of { *Padara*, *Tre Caſtagne* } the greateſt part deſtroyed by the Earthquake.

The Towns of { *La Guardia*, *Malpaſſo*, *Campo Rotundo*, *La Potielli*, St. *Antonino*, St. *Pietro*, *Moſtorbianco*, *Montpileri*, *La Annunciata*, *Falicchi*, *Placchi*, } Wholly Overflowed, Conſumed and loſt in this Fiery Inundation, with all the Lands belonging to them not Footſteps of them remaining.

The

The Towns of { *Mascalucia*, *S. Giovanni de Galermo*, } Ruin'd in part.

The large *Gardens* and *Vineyards* of *Albanelli* *Overflown* and *Destroyed.*

The Famous Piece of *Antiquity* of *Marcus Marcellus* much Ruin'd.

*Madonna de Monserrato* destroyed, besides many *Castles*, *Farmes*, and other Places, which have run the same Fortune, whose Names we for brevity pass over.

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FINIS.